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TITLE: The North Carolina Outreach Network (NCON)

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ISSUE: Since 1992, the North Carolina Outreach Network (NCON) has existed to provide adequate and effective training for HIV/STDs prevention service providers throughout North Carolina.

SETTING: HIV/STDs prevention service providers (known to some as "Outreach Workers"), conduct street and community outreach, targeting highrisk areas, where the populations normally congregate. These areas vary from street corners, crack houses, shooting galleries, liquor houses to clubs, bars, shopping malls, and parks and recreation centers.

PROJECT: The North Carolina Outreach Network is a coalition of outreach workers lay health advisors and peer educators who provide HIV/STDs education through street and community throughout the state of North Carolina. The goals of the Outreach Network are to provide: 1) ongoing training on issues affecting all populations identified as high risk; 2) information about advances in the field of HIV/AIDS/STDs and other related issues; 3) techniques for stress management and the prevention of burnout; 4) techniques for implementing effective outreach strategies; 5) an opportunity to network problem solve "challenges" and share "successes" in outreach. The network meets on a quarterly basis rotating across the state Each meeting is hosted by an AIDS Service Agency or CommunityBased Organization During these meetings members receive training and information updates on HIV/STDs and other related issues strategize about program implementation, and share information regarding organizational successes and/or opportunities for improvement. The North Carolina Outreach Network selects officers annually; to build sufficient infrastructure to enable efficient and effective meetings whereby objectives outlined in the mission statement are met.

RESULTS: In 1994 the NCON decided to work collaboratively in creating a strategies manual. The manual serves as an in-depth training resource. This document was revised in 1997. The NCON has been able to 1) identify specific roles and responsibilities for an outreach worker: 2) strategies that work 3) develop tools to assess community needs: 4) identify special populations: and 5) establish relationships in highrisk areas and throughout various communities.

LESSONS LEARNED: The NCON has identified outreach as one of the most important parts of HIV/STD prevention in North Carolina Outreach is going beyond the norm to reach individuals using various methods while involving the community. The outreach worker is the primary member of the health and human service team that provides information, risk reduction education and motivation to implement and maintain behavior change. Agencies and organizations should make continuing education a priority for their outreach staff and encourage training opportunities.

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